

LIVE OAK, A TOWN THAT'S ALIVE

By J. A. GRAY

Since 1890, Live Oak has shown a growth in population of nearly one thousand a year. This phenomenal increase as also the continued progress in business developments and the establishment of new enterprises all point to a "GREATER" LIVE OAK.

"Way down upon the Suwannee river" will ever live in song and story. Some one has said that song and sentiment are the highest wealth of any section. Poetry and romance have woven some beautiful and half historic tales of this Suwannee river country, yet such possessions, however, are not generally counted when we sum up the more material wealth of a progressive county and its live, up-to-date citizenry, and tell the story of a city which is now making great strides to wealth, fame and greatness.

Suwannee county, with a population of 20,000, contains 440,000 acres. The greater part of the county is either under cultivation or rich in tracts of valuable timber land. The population of the country districts is made up largely of a very thrifty class of farmers, who raise cotton, corn, cane, potatoes, cattle and hogs. Cotton is the money crop. Enough of the staples are raised, however, to make the farmer independent. He is thus able to hold the cotton for the higher market prices. The farming lands are fertile and good harvests are reaped every season. Situated in such a section, a city in its midst has a fortunate setting.

Live Oak, the county seat of Suwannee county, is an industrial city, its most distinguishing feature being its manufacturing plants. The stranger within her gates is greeted by the busy hum of machinery, the never-ending buzz of saws and the heavy traffic noticeable everywhere.

The county court house is the source of a very pardonable pride to not only the people of Live Oak, but the entire county. It is situated about the center of the city. The large square on which it stands contributes to its excellent appearance. It is built of gray pressed brick and finished on the outside with beautiful designs in stucco. The interior has marble wainscoting and floors. The different offices are well appointed and conveniently furnished. The second story has a large and handsome court room, the main auditorium and galleries having a seating capacity of about six hundred. Complete with the furnishings the building cost \$42,500.

The county officials form a very able body of men, and their hearty support of all measures for the development of the county's resources reflect the progressive spirit of the population at large. The personnel is as follows: J. N. Conner, county judge; W. W. Bryson, clerk of circuit court; J. H. Rickerson, sheriff; A. D. Hemming, tax assessor; J. N. Meeks, tax collector; Prof. J. E. Wood, superintendent public instruction. Col. A. Lee Humphreys, a prominent lawyer, is chairman of the Board of Commissioners.

The question of hard roads has been taken up by the Commissioners, and a road-building machine is now at work on the hard road which is to connect Live Oak and Suwannee Springs, a distance of seven miles. As soon as this is completed roads in other directions will be built until an entire system of hard surface roads will cover the county.

Probably the greatest factor in the wonderful progress and business activity of the city is its manufacturing industries, which have caused many to settle here. The census of 1890 gave Live Oak a population of only 1,600. The city now enthusiastically claims six thousand; a growth of almost a thousand a year.

Chief of these industries is the manufacture of lumber. Two large sawmills, turning out rough lumber, and two large planing mills daily send out hundreds of thousands of feet of lumber to the Northern markets. The largest of these mills is owned and operated by the Dowling Lumber and Naval Stores Company, a two-million-dollar stock company. The stockholders are citizens of Live Oak and have considerable interest in the growth of the city. Thomas Dowling is the president of this corporation, R. L. Dowling, vice-president, and O. D. McFarland secretary. R. W. Bennett is the head of the office force of this extensive business.

Another large plant, The Live Oak Manufacturing Company, with Col. Geo. E. Porter as president, manufactures dressed lumber, operates the electric light plant and ice manufacturing plant. This mill has a large capacity and is busy all the time. Electric power is used for all the machinery. The electric light plant is equipped with machinery suited to the present and future needs of Live Oak in this respect. The city is well lighted, and a large portion of the manufacturing plants use electric power altogether. Geo. E. Porter, Jr., is secretary and treasurer of this company, and looks after the business of the plant, while Edward Porter is thoroughly conversant with all the machinery and electrical appliances, and has this part of the plant under his supervision. The ice plant has recently been increased and now has a capacity of twenty tons.

While the manufacture of lumber is a large factor

in the business of the city, there are other manufacturing plants of importance which promise to be very successful enterprises. The Novelty Manufacturing Company is one of these. All kinds of novelties in wood are turned out at this factory. Messrs. Humphreys are the proprietors. The very popular Automobile roller swing is manufactured here.

The Florida Tile Works is another very busy establishment. Although a new enterprise, it is taxed to its utmost capacity to supply the demand. The city will soon have all the sidewalks in the business sections of this tiling. This business is very successfully managed by C. N. Hildreth.

The history of the manufacturing industries would not be complete without mentioning the plant now about completed which will extract spirits of turpentine from wood. Stumps, sawdust, etc., can be used in the process of distillation.

Messrs. Robbins & McGehee have a large foundry and machine shops running full blast. They make or repair anything from a bolt to a locomotive engine.

Other manufacturing plants of importance are the Live Oak Sash and Door Company, which is just getting under way; The Florida Cooperage Company and The Live Oak Cooperage Company. The first named as incorporated for \$25,000 and a large and important industry bids fair soon to be developed in the manufacture of sash, doors and blinds.

New corporations are being formed all the time, new lines of manufacturing being the object of the majority of these, and there seems to be no limit to the capacity of the city in this direction.

The location of Live Oak is one of great commercial advantage. The Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard Air Line railways intersect here. The competition of these two trunk lines for the large amount of shipping to distant markets insures good service.

The Seaboard Air Line affords the city a direct route to the east coast metropolis and also to the Gulf ports. A goodly portion of the shipping to the Northern markets is also done over this road.

The Atlantic Coast Line affords direct lines of transportation to Tampa and south Florida points, and much of the freight from the north finds its way over this line.

Two smaller roads, with their terminals here, are of inestimable importance in the development of the various natural resources of the surrounding country.

The Florida Railway connects Live Oak and Mayo with Perry and intermediate points. Hon. Frank Drew is the president of this road, and he is ever on the alert for the business interests of all the cities and towns along its line. Mr. Drew has about completed plans for the extension of the road to Fernandina, and expects to have trains running between Live Oak and Fernandina within a year. The section through which this road runs is rich in agricultural productions and in the large belts of pine timber. Sawmills are located all along the road, and several cars of lumber are shipped every day over the Florida Railway through Live Oak to the big lumber markets.

The Live Oak, Perry & Gulf Railway extends from this city to Perry, a small part of the track being not yet laid. This road, which does quite an extensive business, however, running four to eight trains daily, is owned by a two-million-dollar stock company, at the head of which are the proprietors of the Dowling Lumber and Naval Stores Company. This railway is chartered to be built to some outlet on the Gulf of Mexico, and the point now in view is St. Marks. Live Oak's future commercial importance is assured with already four railways making it one of the most accessible places in Florida.

Right here might well be mentioned some of the nearby resorts which are growing in importance and even now enjoy considerable tourist trade. Suwannee Springs, situated on the Suwannee river, is seven miles distant. A company has been incorporated and a charter granted for an electric railway to connect Live Oak with this resort. The springs are near one of the most picturesque bends of this famous river, adding beauty to its long list of attractions. The waters of these springs have valuable medicinal properties and the proprietors ship large quantities throughout the South. A commodious hotel, built of lime rock and brick, crowns the hill just above the spring. The glistening white of the rocks, contrasting the red color of the brick, and quaintness of the design of the hotel afford a very striking picture to the traveler when he arrives. A number of cottages are fitted up for light housekeeping, and when the hotel is open the cottages are always occupied. Fishing and hunting in abundance are offered, and many sportsmen spend a delightful vacation at the springs.

Dowling Park is another resort on the Suwannee. This is on the Live Oak, Perry & Gulf Railway and more easy of access to Live Oak. This property is owned by the railroad company, which has spent considerable funds in fitting it up in the most attractive style and with every convenience the tourist could desire. The company gives a double daily

passenger service between the park and Live Oak, which enables many to spend a half holiday or go for a day's outing to this very attractive spot on the banks of the old Suwannee.

Both of these resorts are growing in popularity, and there is no doubt but that in a few seasons that the capacity of both hotels will have to be greatly increased to accommodate the guests who will seek these watering places for health or recreation.

That Live Oak will fully develop the commercial resources of the surrounding country is clearly shown by the number and character of its business houses. There are no less than one hundred different stores of various kinds in the city.

Probably the leading mercantile establishment of the city is the Worth Stephens Company, dealers in general merchandise and cotton and produce buyers. This house carries an immense stock of goods covering almost every line of trade.

The Hinely Stephens Company is another large firm dealing in livestock, buggies, carriages, etc. This establishment covers nearly half a block and does a large business, both wholesale and retail.

The Florida Livestock and Vehicle Company is a new firm, incorporated with a capital of \$50,000, which will deal in horses, mules, carriages and buggies. Sid Conner is the popular manager of this business.

Next in size is the large furniture establishment of J. B. Barton, who is one of the leading business men of the city, being connected with several large enterprises.

The Suwannee Drug Company, Dr. H. F. Airth, proprietor, does an extensive wholesale and retail drug business and also runs the Live Oak Coco Cola bottling works, and are large distributors of this well-known beverage.

The City Pharmacy, Live Oak Drug Company and Barclay & Groover are large drug stores, and are well appointed establishments.

F. Rubenstein, S. J. White, The Ladies' Emporium, Lewin's, H. A. Blackburn and Lewin & Helvenston are large dry goods firms all enjoying a lucrative trade.

E. J. Blume & Co., The Globe Store, Wolfe's and Burdick's are general mercantile houses.

The ladies' millinery needs are well supplied by The Band Box, Mrs. E. N. Lawler, proprietor; Mrs. M. V. Edwards and Mrs. C. W. Bache. These keep well abreast of the newest fashions and keep on hand a very attractive display of millinery at all seasons.

The grocery stores are so numerous that to mention them would be tedious. They are amply sufficient to supply all the needs and larders of even the six thousand and more population.

Two banks with a combined capital of \$125,000 take care of the financial part of the city's business. The First National Bank has Chas. H. Brown for its president, and Des. E. Horn as cashier. The Live Oak Bank is under the management of H. F. Dexter as president and C. D. Blackwell as cashier. The reports of these banks at various times indicate the great amount of business transacted in this busy little city.

Other business firms which are important factors in the city's business are the two commission houses, Live Oak Brokerage and Commission Company and C. W. Rogers. Also the insurance business of B. W. Helvenston; Casswell & Collins, undertakers and Florida Book Supply Company are prominent firms.

Live Oak might well lay claim to the reputation of being a news center, having five newspapers and periodicals published here. The publishing house of Sherwood & Pound is the home of the Suwannee Democrat, the leading newspaper. This is one of the largest and most influential weekly papers of the State. Messrs. Sherwood & Pound are publishers and proprietors. They also are publishers of The Florida Christian Advocate, official organ of Florida Methodism. Rev. J. B. Ley, D. D., is editor of this magazine. The Present Truth Messenger, Elder O. T. Mattox, editor, is the organ of the Advent Church, and is published here by the publication society of that church. The Florida Crescent has long held its place in Florida journalism. It is also influential in the local field. Jeff L. Davis is editor. All of these are playing a large part in the stimulus of progress now so evident everywhere in the city and county. The publishing and printing house of Sherwood & Pound was one of the largest in the State until last week, when it was destroyed by fire. It was equipped with typesetting machinery and all the newest mechanical printing devices, and enjoyed a well-earned reputation for turning out a very high grade of work.

The professions supply quite an array of learned men. Live Oak's bar has been the recipient of much complimentary mention. Among these legal lights are: Col. Jno. G. Reardon, Roberson & Small, Humphreys & Harrell, Leslie & Lamb, Rees & Rees,

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